

Remarks to the MDA/AIAA 7th Annual U.S. Missile Defense Conference

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General O'Reilly, thank you very much.

Today, I want to talk about where the debate over missile defense stands and where it is going.

The world is a dangerous place. Non state actors and rogue nations are working to develop missile technology to do harm to America. That is why we need missile defense systems that work. That means the systems have to be rigorously tested and operationally effective. In short, they have to work.

We can take three steps to achieve this goal.

First, our testing requirements need to be rigorous, intellectually honest, and thorough, especially with regards to the long-range, Ground-based Midcourse Defense system.

Second, the Missile Defense Agency needs to be integrated into the normal defense planning, budgetary, and weapons systems development processes in the Pentagon.

Finally, we need to make some tough choices in a budgetary environment that is, to say the least, constrained.

As you know, I have been a longtime supporter of missile defense. I voted for the Missile Defense Act of 1999, which made it the policy of the United States to deploy an effective National Missile Defense system that could defend the United States against limited ballistic missile attack.

There was one caveat: the system had to work.

This is why
I didn't always agree with everything that the Bush administration did with regard to missile defense, especially the decision to deploy the GMD system in Alaska before we had confidence that it would work.

Our critics sometimes want to get something in the ground as soon as possible to meet a political deadline rather than something that works. Testing was something to be put on the backburner.

We know that the Ground Based Missile Defense System has not been sufficiently tested. In fact, there was no intercept testing in fiscal 2008. These delays led the Pentagon's testing and evaluation office to raise questions as to whether we were any safer.

Additionally, the rush to deploy the system has forced the Department to go back and fix problems that could have been avoided had we taken a more rigorous and systematic approach to engineering, developing, testing and fielding the system.

This is like buying a used car without first taking it to a mechanic. Why buy other people's problems when you can have a mechanic let you know what they are beforehand?

Finally, missile defenses do not have the luxury of expecting to operate in a predictable world where the threat and time of engagement is known. That's why all missile defenses must be integrated into a multi-mission environment and included within our total force structure.

Consistent and improved engineering, testing, and appropriate refurbishments must be the foundation of our progress on ground-based missile defense.

So, how do
we improve testing?

The good news is that General O'Reilly's new approach is a step in the right direction.

General O'Reilly has developed a remarkable insight that could lead to remarkable results. The insight is this: you can't figure out what you need until you know what you have. Now, in any other endeavor, crunching numbers would be an obvious way to learn where you stand. Athletes do it. CEOs do it. Why wouldn't we do it?

I look forward to seeing the results of the review when it is completed later this year. I hope that it will provide a solid blueprint for an adequate testing program that will increase our confidence in the defensive capability of the GMD system.

The second major issue is that we need to reintegrate the Missile Defense Agency into the normal DOD acquisition, budgetary, and requirements processes. Doing so could expedite the deployment of missile defense capabilities to protect us against a North Korean missile attack.

The Missile Defense Agency is fundamentally a research and development organization.

It evolved from a science and research foundation that rewards the successful demonstration and validation of technology under test conditions, as opposed to developing and fielding full-scale weapons systems.

The Missile Defense Agency cannot and should not be expected to fully comprehend, let alone respond to, operational suitability and survivability requirements. It is just not a part of the agency's core competency.

The reason Aegis BMD and THAAD have done as well as they have is because they originally belonged to the Navy and the Army.

They defined and developed the details of their programs and made certain that they adequately met all the normal requirements to develop and field their respective systems.

THAAD and Aegis BMD maintained standards that guided the development of weapons systems and, for the most part, they stuck to them. There was no ad-hoc approach here. They had a consistent process and approach in place. They stuck to it and produced better systems.

The results of this approach are evident. In 2008, the commander of the Navy's operational test and evaluation force declared that the current version of Aegis BMD to be "operationally effective and suitable."

On the other hand, the one deployed system that MDA has had the largest role in defining, developing, and testing has been the GMD system. That's where we have the biggest doubts.

What is clear is that in order to have missile defense systems that work, the military services must define their operational requirements early. They also have to stay involved throughout the program to ensure that key war fighting requirements are built into the system from the beginning.

Now, as you know, there are also issues with the European site. First, let's assume that our only objective is to provide the United States a "shoot-look-shoot" capability to defend against a potential Iranian long-range missile attack.

Let's also

assume that other threats and geo-political considerations don't matter. Then, and only then, would the European GMD proposal would be attractive.

But Iran has not developed a long-range missile capable of reaching the United States. Yet.

If Iran were to do so in the future, the GMD interceptors currently deployed at Ft. Greely in Alaska should have the capability to protect the continental United States.

The argument that the U.S. would be naked against an Iranian nuclear threat unless we deploy the GMD site in Europe is simply not right.

But more importantly, while Iran is a ways away from developing an ICBM class missile, it already has the largest force of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles in the Middle East. These systems are currently capable of targeting U.S. forces and our allies throughout the region.

And guess what? The proposed GMD interceptor site in Poland would have little, if any, capability to counter the existing threat from Iran's short-and medium-range ballistic missiles.

What's most puzzling to me about the debate over the European Site is that proponents of the site have been running around with their hair on fire warning about a long range threat from Iran that does not exist. They have said little or nothing to address the existing threat.

My position has always been that before we move to expand the GMD system, we need a little commonsense; that is to say, more of a "first things first" approach.

We need to take a number of specific steps. First, along with our allies, we need to develop and deploy sufficient theater missile defense capabilities to counter the existing short and medium threats.

I never understood why the previous Administration did not make this the first step in their plans for European missile defense. The existing threat seemed to be an afterthought.

Second, we need to have a greater degree of confidence that the GMD system will work before we make a decision to expand it.

This is why Congress included a provision in the Defense Authorization bill last year that prohibits the Pentagon from acquiring or deploying operational GMD interceptors in Europe until the Secretary of Defense certifies to Congress that they work.

I expect that Congress will maintain this prohibition.

Third, the Obama Administration is doing the right thing by undertaking a review of the proposed European site. Given the key political, strategic, and technical issues associated with the proposed deployment, a review is fully justified and necessary.

The Administration has also signaled a desire to cooperate with Russia on missile defense. Russia and the United States face a potential threat from Iranian ballistic missiles, and we should look for areas where we can work together.

But Russia should not and does not have a veto over the security of the United States and its allies. I told that to the Russians when I led a bipartisan delegation there in December. I also delivered a clear message to our allies in Poland and the Czech Republic. Even as we move to do the testing we should have done already, and as the new Administration reviews European missile defense, we will continue to work with them to strengthen the U.S.-NATO missile defense partnership.

Finally, we are entering the most challenging budgetary environment we have faced in a generation. We will likely be forced to make tradeoffs throughout the budget, and as a result, the overall funding for missile defense may be reduced.

In my view, one of the fundamental problems with the missile defense program over the past 20 years has been that Congress and the Pentagon have been unwilling to make hard choices. We have tried to continue every program, regardless of cost increases or schedule delays. The Airborne Laser, which is eight years behind schedule and four billion dollars over budget, is an excellent example. It reminds me of the definition of insanity. You keep doing the wrong thing over and over and don't learn from it.

Let me be clear. Those days are over. We can no longer continue to do everything and explore every potential technology. Missile Defense cannot be like some second marriages: the triumph of hope over experience.

Our highest priority within the missile defense budget should be providing our combatant commanders adequate and sufficient theater missile defense capabilities to meet their war fighting requirements. The threats from short- and medium- range missiles represent the main threat to our national security and our allies. That's what we should be focusing on.

In addition, we also need to focus our limited resources on mature systems to address near-term threats. Right now, only twenty two Aegis warships are planned to be upgraded to conduct ballistic missile defense operations. We must seriously consider adding additional Aegis cruisers and destroyers to be able to conduct ballistic missile defense operations.

Finally, future investments in GMD should be focused on addressing a couple of key issues.

Most importantly, now that the system has been deployed, we must make certain that the existing GMD system can conduct real-time combat operations.

Developing a missile defense system that works is a tall order because we are balancing geopolitical concerns, budgetary concerns, and technological concerns. But we can get it right if we have a rigorous and systematic approach put in place.

In the late 1990s, the THAAD program suffered a number of setbacks. The Army brought in a new program manager, Colonel Patrick O'Reilly, to get the program back on track. Then Colonel O'Reilly applied a systematic and disciplined approach to the THAAD program that many agree is the reason why that program is healthy today.

I am hopeful that General O'Reilly will bring that same approach to the entire missile defense program. If he is successful in his efforts, I am confident that some time in the near future the Pentagon's testing and evaluation office will declare that our systems will work in a real world environment.

Thank you very much.